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COMMENTARIES ON DEEPAK CHOPRA AND MENAS KAFATOS' BOOK, "YOU ARE THE UNIVERSE"; 2017, HARMONY BOOKS.

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YOU ARE THE UNIVERSE
Deepak Chopra & Menas Kafatos
Harmony Books, New York 2017
Reviewed by Ervin Laszlo

It is a rare pleasure to write a review of Chopra's and Kafatos' new book, *You Are The Universe*. It is also somewhat vexing in that I agree with nearly every word in it; after all, a reviewer is expected to say at least one thing that he/she knows better than the author or authors. In this case, however, I can say with Oscar Wilde, "I wish I'd have said that." And I can also appreciate the expectation of his friends who remarked "You will, Oscar, you will."

I will indeed myself say what this book says, with due credit of course to its authors. I will affirm and re-affirm these ideas, concepts and principles, because I have already said them in my own formulation in various books and articles. We have been thinking along similar lines and, even more, our thinking has been evolving along similar lines. We are now asking the same questions and giving basically the same answer. We are formulating it in different ways; but that is not a problem—agreement does not require repetition.

The crucial issue behind accepting the proposition of this book—namely, that "you are the universe"—regards the fundamental nature of the universe. Before we could say whether the universe is you or I, or everyone or no one, we have to know if it is the result of a random concatenation of things and events, or if it is determined in some way. Scientists abhor determinism because in the classical Newtonian framework it suggests determination by a mechanism—a sublime mechanism but a mechanism just the same—where the past determines the present, and the present determines the future. This hypothesis is outdated and is rightfully relegated to he dustheaps of history. But the alternative to it is not randomness and serendipity. A thing or event in the universe need not be either purely aleatory or fully determined or, even worse, pre-determined by all that went on beforehand. There is another alternative, that is difficult to accept for a classical-physics trained mind (although not for a quantum-physics oriented one), because the alternative is that the given thing or event is just more likely to happen than some other thing or event. This can be expressed in the formula, when condition A obtains, the probability that B will follow is greater than that C will follow. This expresses a form of preference—the preference for B under condition A, relative to C.

The idea of preference in nature is hard to accept in natural science, because it smacks of something that classical science excluded from nature, namely "choice." If the thing or event we observe is more likely to occur than another thing or event, nature demonstrates a preference for it. But does nature have preferences?

Scientists get around this problem by claiming that the laws of nature are simply such that under condition A, B happens statistically more often than C. No further explanation or interpretation is needed: all we need to do is to record this observed fact. This, however, does not do away with the problem, because the question why this happens is not answered. If not mere chance, then what is responsible for the higher probability of the observation of B? Randomness does not explain this and

analogous phenomena. A random mixing of the elements that make up the universe would not create a significant probability that the genome of a fruit fly would result in the timeframe available for evolution in the universe, namely that which has elapsed since the birth of the universe in the singularity known as the Big Bang. In regard to anything more complex and interesting than the presence of inert gases in space, an additional factor must be involved. The student asking "if not by the determination of the past (of the rest of the universe) on the present, why then?" is usually told to keep quiet and just work on the equations. This fails in regard to the ultimate task of science, which is to illuminate and make understandable what is taking place in the world. To be satisfied that B merely happens, is a cop-out. Why is it that it happens? Why is the world such that the laws that govern existence and evolution in space and time produce the universe we observe?

If the laws of nature make the universe what it is, and if what it is, is improbable under the assumption of randomness, some factor of selection must be at work. The search space of possible universes is enormous—why is it that this particular universe has come about, rather than any of the myriad other universes that would be possible? Answering that we live in this universe, because otherwise we would not be here to ask about it, is the answer given by adherents of the anthropic principle, but it is not satisfactory: it is still the answer of serendipity, bolstered by the consideration that it worked for us, this time. But why did it work? We are back to square one. We cannot avoid acknowledging that some selection has been at work in the build-up of the phenomena observed in the universe.

Given that randomness cannot be the answer, our universe and all things in it must have been "selected" in the welter of alternative possibilities. Selection implies choice, and choice implies intention. The conclusion that appears is that the universe did not just happen to be as it is, it was brought about—perhaps, intentionally. This comes dangerously close to the notion of a Creator. It is the Creator who intended the universe the way it is. With this supposition we are beyond science, we are in the domain of theology.

The "creation implies creator" thesis is a leap in reasoning, and it is not necessary. The meaningful alternative is that creation and creator are one. The universe creates itself, because the universe is not random, it is not the product of chance: it is that what it intends to be. The universe selects and chooses to be the way it is, not by obeying an external agency, but by being that agency itself.

The thesis put forward by Deepak and Menas is that the universe is the way it is because it is how the cosmic consciousness that creates the laws of nature—and therewith the phenomena we observe in nature—behaves, comes up with essentially the same answer. I agree, with the proviso that "cosmic consciousness" is not something that acts on the universe, but is the universe itself. It is not a case of a creator acting on its creation, but of the creator creating itself. The universe itself is the cosmic consciousness. It is a conscious, intending, selecting universe. I prefer to call this creative factor the "intelligence of the cosmos," to highlight that this factor is the cosmos itself—it is its own intelligence—and that our consciousness is the way this intelligence is manifesting for us. The universe we inhabit, and embody, is the cosmic intelligence that chooses and intends itself. Our consciousness is a reflection,

a projection, a manifestation of the intelligence of the universe: of the intelligence that *is* the universe.

Here "hologram" is the applicable principle, because a hologram can be fragmented without losing its wholeness: all the information that constitutes it, is present in all its parts. If cosmic consciousness is a hologram (meaning that the universe itself is a hologram), your consciousness and mine is a fractal of the universe. And then we truly *are* the universe.

To remark on the last term in the subtitle of this book "why it matters," is obvious. If the universe is a hologram, then we are fractal elements of it: we are the universe. And being the universe is very different from being a separate or separable part of it. We are not the part; we are the whole. This is the new paradigm in science, and in all areas of inquiry into who we are, whether in religion or in spirituality, in business or in economics, or in politics. Discovering who we are matters more than anything other than our instinctive yearning for belonging and for giving and receiving love. Our inherent disposition for belonging and for loving, and our re-discovered insight into who we are, can together bring us back to the path we had nearly lost in the rudderless chaos of change and transformation. It is the path of the oneness of the world, and of our oneness with (and not in) the world.

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The author's latest books on this subject are
WHAT IS REALITY?: The New Map of Cosmos and Consciousness
(Select Books, New York 2016), and
THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE COSMOS: Why Are We Here?—New Answers from the Frontiers of Science (Inner Traditions, Rochester VT 2017).